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TO THE

AGRICULTURISTS,

LANDLORDS, & TENANTS,

OF

ENGLAND.

TO THE

AGRICULTURISTS, LANDLORDS,

AND

TENANTS OF ENGLAND.

The Liberal axe has been laid at the root of Agricultural Depression ! The malt tax, forsooth, has been repealed and a beer tax of greater intrinsic value has been imposed in its place : the payment has been hocused from out of one pocket to out of the other!! The Income tax has been increased!!! But the crowning feat of all, the large and statesmenlike measure which is to convert adversity into prosperity, which is to enable English farmers successfully to compete with the virgin soil of the foreigner, has been added to the statute book, in a word, the “ *Hares and Rabbits Bill* ” has been passed!!!! Can humbug go further than this ? Can a more palpable instance of the pursuit of the shadow for the substance be adduced ? Can a more hollow attempt than this be made to relieve the farmer from the difficulties and burdens of his present position ? That ground game, preserved to excess, has been a legitimate subject of complaint in some districts, no one will dispute ; but where the grievance existed the law was already sufficiently powerful to indemnify the tenant, and the Hares and Rabbits Bill has been called into existence in order to throw a film

over the agricultural eye and to divert the thoughts from the contemplation of the *real* and heavy taxes which the land is now compelled to bear. A Liberal Government is very scrupulous to dot all its i's and cross all its t's in the matter of the malt tax and the like, but it is careful to a degree to avoid speaking one single word which could direct attention to local taxation. Let me then address to the Agriculturists of England a few words on this all-important, much-neglected subject. A subject which we see every now and then coming to the front—discussed in an off-hand and perfunctory manner and then quietly and unceremoniously being handed back into the limbo of oblivion, until from some special cause or other it again appears upon the stage, and again having done its transient work, it disappears and is forgotten. It has been so for years, and will be so for years yet to come unless the landed interest, whether owners or occupiers, will consent no longer to be looked upon as beasts of burden upon whose shoulders taxation may be safely heaped, from the knowledge that until their backs are completely broken the burdens can be laid on them with impunity. *This must be put an end to!* Landlords and tenants must assert their rights, and Parliament must be told in words too plain to be misunderstood that the last feather of proverbial weight has been imposed and that the Agricultural Camel has succumbed under it. But it is somewhat remarkable that those most interested—that those on whose shoulders the burdens lie heaviest, know only in the most superficial manner how and under what heads the taxation of which they rightly complain is laid upon them. I therefore propose in the following short remarks to lay before the public a kind of map of the various charges which are made upon the agricultural interest—which charges I purpose dividing into two heads—1st, those of which most are

aware, but few seriously think about—and 2ndly, those of which only a few are fully aware, and none seriously think of. Under the first head, standing pre-eminently forward, are the *Maintenance of the Poor*, and the *Two-third cost of Lunatics*, and the *Half cost of the Police*. It must of course be understood that particulars vary according to locality—that every word I write will not find substantial proof in every district, but otherwise they will bear universal application. 1st, then, as to the

POOR RATE.

For a starting point I will say that it is impossible to give a just and equitable reason why this should be imposed upon the land only—why the land only should be made liable for the support of those who are of cosmopolitan manufacture—writing, in the presence as it were, of many guardians of the poor, I state without fear of contradiction, that many such cases as the following frequently occur:—Men are rendered temporarily or permanently chargeable to a Union who have never before set a foot in the County, whatever it may be—men from accident or from sickness are sent from ships in the several seaboards and from other places to be kept and maintained, and perhaps finally buried, at the expense of the land-owners and occupiers, who have no other interest in their welfare than a Christian has for his fellow creature, an interest which *is* and an expense which *should* be equally shared by others—accidents of all kinds and degrees occurring among agricultural and manufacturing populations are relegated to the Union, except in such cases where admission to a Hospital can be obtained—worn out gentlemen's and tradesmen's servants, having previously squandered all their savings in the captivating allurements of taking a public-house—soldiers and

sailors who have outlived their kith and kin, and whose pension, if any, fails to keep the wolf from the door—idlers, thieves, prostitutes, enjoy themselves when they can and failing opportunity have recourse to the workhouse, and claim each as his (or her) right board and lodging from the land. That such a system should have prevailed centuries ago when the land was about the only property on which taxation *could* be laid, will pass without notice ; but that it should continue to-day, when the country is plethoric with capital and incomes which it had not then entered within the range of the wildest imagination even to dream of, is a slur upon the sagacity of those who are sent to Parliament in order to legislate with even-handed justice for all alike. A cognate subject to this is that of

EDUCATION.

On the intrinsic merits of which I will not enter—were I to do so I should possibly shock some, at least, of those to whom these words are addressed by the uncompromising denunciations which I feel disposed to apply to it ; but whether right or wrong, whether beneficial or not, two grounds of complaint against it stand clearly in view—1st. The source from which payments in that behalf are made. 2ndly. That a class *far removed from that of paupers are educating their children at the expense of others.*

My next subject is that of

POLICE.

Can anything be more unjust than the incidence of taxation under this head ? Are the police kept for the special benefit of one class, or for the protection of the lives and properties of all

alike? If the latter, why then is a large proportion of the public exempt, except to the most trifling amount, from contributing to their support? Take an example: A is a farmer holding 300 acres of land; his every hour is one of anxiety at least, oftentimes of loss; upon the estimated value of his holding, after certain deductions have been made, is he assessed to the police-rate; his house is, we will suppose, comfortably furnished, but his income is most precarious. His neighbour B lives in a commodious house, of more or less pretensions, as the case may be, furnished in a style of luxurious magnificence, replete with pictures, plate, china, jewels and the like, of great merit and of considerable value, for the protection of which he, like A, looks to the police, and yet B is only rated to their support upon the assumed year-to-year value, after deductions similar to those of his neighbour A have been made, of his house and curtilages. In all probability the value of the property owned by A and B respectively is as 10 to 100, yet the payment which they make for their protection by the police is as 100 to 10! In plain English, the hard-working man, the results of whose labours may, in a moment when he is looking forward with legitimate confidence to the success which shall crown his efforts, be ruined beyond all hope of recovery by circumstances which he is impotent to control, pays for the protection of his neighbour to whom care and anxiety are almost unknown words. I shall, of course, be told that half the cost of the police is paid out of the Consolidated Fund. I admit it, and with gratitude to the Government of Lord Beaconsfield; and I answer, in reply, that to that half so paid, those on whose shoulders the burden of *the other half is wholly put* contribute in equal proportion with all other classes.

LUNATICS.

The subject of lunatics and their support goes hand-in-hand with that of *paupers* and *police*, and the injustice of laying the burden of these last on one class only, is not only not less in the case of lunatics, but I would submit that it stands out even more conspicuously. Subjoined are a few particulars from the last report of the Visitors to the two Kentish Asylums, from which I find that on December 31st, 1879, there were 1838 lunatics in confinement; but of this grievous total there were only 89 *agricultural labourers*, their *wives*, *children*, and *widows*; *domestic servants* amounted to 47; *soldiers* were 9 in number; *sailors* were 13; *veterinary surgeons*, 3; there was 1 *clergyman's son*, 2 *professors of music*, and 1 *professor of mathematics!!* and the balance of the 1838 inmates is made up of one or more of *every imaginable trade and calling in the world*. Surely it is not asking too much that an already over-weighted class should be relieved from such a burden as this? I will close this subject by saying that from April, 1878, to January, 1879 (inclusive), the Lunatic Asylum Rate for the County of Kent amounted to £29,296; (in 1876 it was £40,240; in 1877, £43,740; in 1878, £48,714; and in 1880, £34,355); that the contributions from the Unions and other sources, after deducting the sums received from Government, amounted to £48,756, making a gross total of £70,052.

I now come to those items of taxation of which few only are aware, and none seriously think of. These are, speaking generally—

The Weights and Measures Act.

The Adulteration of Food and Drugs Act.

The Petroleum Act.

The Coroners.

The County Bridges.

The Highways.

The Registration of Voters.

The Reformatory and Industrial Schools.

&c., &c., &c., &c.

Can there be any well-founded reason why any class should be exempted from payment in behalf of these? Surely *all* are interested in having just weights and measures! The adulteration of food, &c., is a subject to which no one will declare himself to be indifferent and careless!! The Petroleum Act is one without which the loss of life and property might be serious and frequent; and these three cost about £2,000 a year!!!

Highways again! Can anything be more unjust, than that tradesmen in towns, with their huge lumbering, road-destroying vans should use, for their own profit and gain, the various highways without contributing one farthing towards the expense of keeping them in repair? There are many instances in the district from which I write in which, since the abolition of turnpikes, brewers, millers, grocers, &c., who under the turnpike system contributed £300 a-year and upwards for the use of the roads, have now the same privilege at the cost of about £20—that main roads are paid for, as to half their cost, out of the County rate (*to which half the local ratepayer contributes his share*), is an advantage only to those who reside near large and populous towns, and is in point of fact *an additional tax, under the guise of relief from taxation, to all rural ratepayers.*

Is locomotion restricted only to one class that the repairs of

county bridges is laid entirely upon it ? and the like question can be asked of all the others.

Coroners, Registration of Voters, and Industrial Schools stand in the same category—*all* being equally interested in them—but *some* only *paying* the expenses incurred.

I have now endeavoured, feebly it is true, to point out to those interested the grounds on which they have reasonable cause to complain—on which they have a right to seek relief from those whose business it is to do justice to all. I have not over-coloured anything ; every statement will bear close examination : and if I shall succeed in directing public attention to a public grievance, I shall be more than repaid for the trouble I have taken in writing the above remarks.

Yours faithfully,

NARB. H. D'AETH.

Knowlton Court, Wingham.

Sept. 23, 1880.





